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VADE MECUM, VOLVENTIBUS ANNIS

THE MAYANS
SAN ANTONIO,
TEXAS

Degree 10

Number 291

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YOU CAN TRIUMPH

A Series of Six Lessons Devoted to:

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| I. TRIUMPH OVER ANXIETY | IV. TRIUMPH OVER GUILT |
| II. TRIUMPH OVER FATIGUE | V. TRIUMPH OVER LONELINESS |
| III. TRIUMPH OVER SELF-PITY | VI. TRIUMPH OVER TRAGEDY |

LESSON V

Mayan Revelation Number 291

TRIUMPH OVER LONELINESS

The Fear of Being Alone

Steps to Surmount Loneliness

When Death Takes Someone You Love

How Loneliness Can Strengthen You

You Can Help Someone Who is Lonely

Turn Torture Into Triumph

Beloved Perfector:

In this Lesson we face a problem that sooner or later comes to all of us. Often a small child is lonely. This may be because he has been separated from his mother, or because he feels that his parents love another member of the family more than they love him. Many people are haunted by the idea that they do not fit into any group, or that no one understands their aspirations. Even if a person is well-adjusted in society there is sure to come a time when he will no longer have the companionship of the one who is nearest and dearest to him.

We cannot escape some of these situations, but we can prepare for them. We can learn the principles that have helped others walk steadily through hours of deep loneliness, and yet make the experience serve some creative purpose. When deprived of human support we can learn to lean upon the ultimate Source of all strength, and emerge more resourceful than we had ever been before. We can triumph over loneliness!

Approach this Lesson with the following Prayer:

PRAYER

Dear Father, I thank Thee for the promise that Thou art always near. Forgive me for my blindness. Help me to see that each day - whether it brings success or adversity, health or sickness, security or loneliness - can serve some useful purpose. Grant me fresh insights as I study this Lesson. Help me to gain wisdom in the nature and use of loneliness. Let me feel that Thou art always near; and no challenge is too great, for Thou art supporting me. In the Master's name, I pray, Amen.

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THE FEAR OF BEING ALONE

A search into the human heart usually reveals some fear of being alone. Sometimes this springs from dependence upon loved ones and companions. Sometimes it is based upon an awareness that each individual has certain thoughts he can never share. Sometimes it is self-inflicted pain - brought on when one wilfully widens the natural gulf between himself and his associates.

In a family of my acquaintance, the eldest son has made a poor adjustment at college. He was afraid he would fail, so he did not attend his classes, nor take his examinations. Naturally, this brought censure, and then the young man felt that both his family and his friends were against him. He was so frightened of the future that those close to him feared that he might take his own life. He desperately needed someone to support him, yet he drew away from those who would gladly have given him guidance and encouragement.

The loneliness caused by alienating one's self from family and friends brings a severe sense of isolation that always affects a person's social life and limits his usefulness. In pathological extremes it leads to mental illness; but in milder form it is so widespread that it touches all our personal lives, or the lives of those whom we love.

Numerous factors in modern life contribute to a sense of estrangement from our fellowmen. The mechanization of industry limits personal contacts. Both city and suburban life tend to make us refrain from being neighborly with those who live in the same apartment, or the same block, for fear of intruding in their personal lives. The members of our families all too often have diverse interests and we frequently find little basis for understanding.

To avoid being plagued by loneliness, men and women go to no end of trouble. Young people join in gangs, or cliques. They wear the same type of dress and slavishly follow the same customs. They are so afraid of being considered different that they are like the little boy who wrote to Santa, saying: "Please bring us a T.V. for Christmas. But if you can't manage to do that, at least bring us an aerial, so the kids next door won't know that we don't have a T.V."

Adults, too, often strive to keep up the appearance of being like the family next door. They live in the same style house, drive the same type cars, and even conform to their customs of behavior. They seem to have much in common, but, all too often, they have no true interest in their neighbors.

It is natural for us to yearn for someone with whom we can have close relationships. We all need at least one person with whom we can communicate on matters of mutual interest. We may do our work well, go to meetings in which we take a surface interest, and appear friendly with our associates, without feeling any underlying sense of belonging.

At times spiritual isolation can torment the mind of an individual. As advanced students of Mayanry it is well for us to keep this in mind. If hours come when we are haunted by loneliness, it is salutary to remember that we are part of a vast company of people who suffer from this same torture. When we are aware that the need for companionship and understanding is very widespread, we will find in our daily contacts numerous opportunities to give the emotional support that our friends and families need.



STEPS TO SURMOUNT LONELINESS

When a person feels that he is misunderstood and unloved he is haunted by a vague emptiness. This experience may come to a small child who has been given little affection, or to an older boy or girl who has become hostile to his parents because love was manifest in excessive domination. It may come to the teenager or adult who, for one reason or another, is uprooted from familiar surroundings.

Let us now consider the steps by which we can surmount some of the common causes of loneliness:

The first step is to analyze its source. Don't assume that none of your deep longing for understanding can be satisfied. Try to put your finger on the causes of your isolation.

If there is a need for greater emotional support, don't attempt to gain a feeling of relatedness by fastening your attention on one casual acquaintance after another. Instead, by your daily consideration and loyalty, form a few deep friendships.

Robinson Crusoe - symbol of the person who is on an island of isolation - found his plight relieved not by losing himself in a crowd, and not by complete withdrawal, but by finding one human being who had a concern for his welfare.

Frequently this is all that one needs to alleviate a feeling of desolation.

Sometimes the cause of loneliness centers in the mind, rather than in the emotions. Strange as it seems, a person may be lonely even when living with a mate who is loving and kind. The intellectual who is married to one who has no interest in literature or philosophy can feel a great gulf of separation. The same is true when one has had a profound religious experience and the life partner is absorbed with material interests - or when one is motivated by a desire to serve, and the other feels no loyalty beyond the walls of their home.

In such situations - and in instances where a single man or woman has little rapport with his family or associates - it is desirable for one who battles loneliness to spend some time each week in the company of others who have similar interests. A book club may be the mental prop which the intellectual needs. The fellowship provided by a church or synagogue gives security to those who seek an anchor in faith, or an opportunity for service. An hour spent with a small "search group" may bring a sense of relatedness to the person who has been struggling to grasp the meaning of life.

A sincere interest in the aspirations of others will increase our ability to communicate with them. Frequently we converse on a very superficial level, never reaching the thought-stream of the person to whom we are speaking.

When you talk to someone - whether it is to a small child, a youth, or a person of mature years - strive to see the world from his point of view. When you succeed in getting beyond the surface of another's thought, and actually share his dreams, or his problems, your personal loneliness is mitigated. Whenever you exert yourself to help relieve another's distress, your loneliness becomes considerably less.

I have found that a study of history and literature can also prove a valuable aid in surmounting loneliness. When we project ourselves into the situations that confronted Florence Nightingale, Marie Curie, Disraeli, or Pasteur, we become a part of the lonely men and women of the ages. When we read the wisdom of Socrates, or the poetry of Matthew Arnold, their struggle for relatedness makes our own seem small. A study of the Bible - as it brings an acquaintance with the prophets, with Paul, and with Jesus, the Messiah - makes us realize that we are part of a great company which has been seeking God and His way.

When a man, or woman, becomes aware that the Holy Spirit is guiding and supporting him, much - if not all - of his loneliness is dispelled.

Seek the companionship of those who have similar interests.

Read what is worthwhile; and store great passages in your memory.

Give some time each week to helping others.

Keep close to God through Bible reading and prayer.

These are important steps in surmounting loneliness. They will aid you in your effort to rise above the feeling that you are "Alone, alone, all, all alone."

WHEN DEATH TAKES SOMEONE YOU LOVE

The sense of isolation that follows bereavement is so widespread that we shall now consider this problem in more detail.

A great void appears when death takes someone we love. Bewilderment and loneliness are inevitable. Frequently, the efforts of others to appear cheerful and to divert our attention only increases our sense of heartache and longing.

In the past decade psychologists have sought an answer to the question: How can a person best make the necessary readjustment when he is bereaved? Authorities in this field indicate that it may be salutary for one to give some expression of his grief. The absence of any outward evidence of sorrow may be as dangerous as over-emotionalism. It is well to let tears and the utterance of one's wretchedness ease the deep wound and help to heal it. An eminent physician said: "Normal grief is the illness that heals itself."

After a reasonable time, of course, an effort must be made to pick up what is left of old values and to find new ones. The person who is immature in years - or in emotions - will require considerable help at this point. He may not easily rally, so will need someone to pull him to his feet and to steady him as he starts once again on the road of life.

We are indeed fortunate if we have developed a healthy, mature personality before we must cope with bereavement. At such a time normal tasks have no meaning, food has no flavor, and the slightest load seems a burden. But if we have faith we can withstand the anguish, and trust that light will soon break into the blackness that engulfs us.

We can be sustained by a firmly established belief that death is not the end, but a doorway into new life. This enables us to see that the parting, which is so hard for us to bear, is only temporary. The assurance that life here is but a fragment of eternal life, brings more than comfort and hope. It puts a challenge into the day immediately before us.

I think of the Christian farmer who was able to turn from the new grave of his dear wife to say to his son, "It looks like rain. We'd better get in the hay." There is a sustaining power in faith; and there is a therapeutic value in work.

Naturally, some people require a longer time in which to make adjustments than do others. When death takes someone you love, don't hurry your period of mourning. Rest when you feel weary and gladly accept the assistance of those who offer help.

This will hasten the day when you once again have strength and perspective. Soon you should be able to do the little things that endear you to your remaining family and friends.

Then will come the important hour when you must face up to the future. The timid soul may make this a sham, putting forth an effort to keep up appearances and make a show of bravery. But if you have a mature mind and deep spiritual resources

you will regain true courage and will find peace overlaying your pain before many weeks have passed. You may even discover that your loneliness is serving as a trigger to release dormant talents. (This possibility will be treated more fully later in the Lesson).

You can see, Beloved Perfector, that it is of utmost importance that before any hour of crisis you become well acquainted with the Father who made and sustains you. When the human support upon which you most heavily rely is taken away, you need not go to pieces for you will know where to turn for help. You will be undergirded by Divine Strength.



HOW LONELINESS CAN STRENGTHEN YOU

Loneliness can be a doorway to a heightened sense of your own worth. You need not drift into despair. In solitary hours you can clarify the aims of your life, see the direction in which you want to go, and find untapped inner resources.

Loneliness can be the seedbed of moral courage. Woodrow Wilson declared that the burdens of public life often robbed him of much of his freedom. As President he was besieged by visitors who sought to influence his opinion, or gain his support. He was expected to attend innumerable ceremonies, watch military reviews and give his time to endless conferences. It was difficult to maintain any private life. Even when his behavior was above reproach he and his loved ones were the victims of slander.

Little wonder that Wilson was terribly lonely! But from his anguish came great sympathy and courage. Those who knew him best said that he suffered excruciating heartache at the declaration of war, and in the years that followed he was filled with agony as he read each report of the maiming or death of men at the front.

Wilson wrote that during the war years every effort to play golf, or go to the theater, or seek any form of diversion was useless. "Even then", he said, "it is lonely, very lonely."

But President Wilson's sense of isolation from his fellowmen served to heighten his compassion. In solitary hours he formulated his dream for an organization to protect all humanity from the scourge of war. His vision of a world ruled by cooperation and harmony was called visionary and impractical, but from hours of inner searching he gained the courage to crusade for a League of Nations. He stood firm, even when one statesman after another deserted him and he was left standing alone.

Your struggle to take a stand against the social practices that undermine our society may sometimes put you in a position where you feel that you are a lonely crusader. In insidious ways those who would promote their products or ideas attempt to convince us that the wholesome way of life that brought our nation to greatness is no longer necessary. Absolute truth, complete honesty, and reasonable simplicity have been the foundation stones of America's prosperity. Even when your associates are willing to make compromises, express your belief in the standards

that build, rather than destroy, character. Although some may not share your high ideals and your altruism, you can still have the courage to stand firmly for those things that you know are noble and just.

Loneliness can also be a spur to creative endeavor. As one's sense of individuality is heightened, he is sometimes prompted to make better use of the unique talents that are his.

This was dramatically illustrated in the life of the poet, Emily Dickinson. First she refused to let her mind be shaped by the narrow theological mold that formed the standards of her family and friends. This made her one who was "different", an outsider. Not one of her companions fully understood her views.

When young Emily refused to modify her convictions, it brought to her soul a deep loneliness. If this emotion had been buried it is quite possible that it might have undermined her health, or her sanity. Instead, she translated her loneliness into sublime verse that has been the inspiration of thousands. In loneliness Emily Dickinson became more sensitive to the beauty of nature, and of the ripples of joy that are produced when one person gives emotional support to another. She turned hours of spiritual isolation into avenues of self-expression. Through her poetry she has communicated with many who are lonely and has given them the impetus to reach out and help others.

Many sublime works of art, like Beethoven's symphony, "The Eroica", have been the expression of a soul that was battling loneliness. Numerous scientific discoveries have been the fruit of lonely hours. Social pioneers, like Gandhi of India and Kagawa of Japan, were men who spent many hours in isolation from their fellowmen - and who also felt a great gulf between their ideals and the accepted standards of behavior.

For you, also, loneliness can be a spur to creative endeavor. The form this takes will, of necessity, depend upon your natural ability. But when you truly seek to use all your talents, it is possible for you to make certain contributions, and also to find depths of satisfaction you would have missed if you had always felt at home in the crowd.

As an advanced student of Mayanry you have learned that insecurity can be a drive to lift you toward greatness, and suffering can stretch your heart to make room for greater joys. Loneliness, too, can not only be transcended, but can be made to serve as a tool for fashioning something of material and spiritual value.

Don't waste your loneliness: let it lift you to new heights of achievement!



YOU CAN HELP SOMEONE WHO IS LONELY

All who have been fortunate enough to master the principles of victorious living have a responsibility to help others who need guidance. You may know a man or woman who has met misfortune and has become so filled with resentment that he has drawn into a shell. You may know a young person who is not making good grades

in school, or is not popular, and so has gradually pulled away from those who are his own age. You may have contact with one who has been shattered by illness and needs help if he is to again take his place in society. Among your acquaintances there may be a widow who has withdrawn from social activities and needs someone to lead her back to the group.

If you will, you can help someone surmount his loneliness.

1. Show a genuine concern for his welfare.
2. Discourage self-pity.
3. Help him to be realistic about his problems, which he must face.
4. Hold up a clear pattern of the person whom he can become.
5. Help him to visualize the new life which he can grasp.
6. Bolster his courage by re-establishing his faith in God.



TURN TORTURE INTO TRIUMPH

Remember that in solitary moments you can gain perspective. You can see truth and beauty more clearly than ever before. You can then return to group fellowship with renewed insight and purpose. You can have more sympathy and understanding with those who are struggling to find the meaning of life. With patience and loving concern, you can listen as someone shares his problems, or his aspirations.

In utter loneliness you can perceive with great clarity that God is with you. It was when Moses was alone on a hillside in a strange land that he heard the voice of God speaking from a burning bush. (See Exodus 3:1-6). It was when Jacob was alone under the stars that he visualized a ladder to heaven, and from its top heard the Lord say: "Behold, I am with thee." (See Genesis 28:10-15). If you will open your mind to the Divine, when you are alone, you can come to a fuller realization of the truth that God is continually guiding and supporting you.

Accept periods of loneliness; do not fight against them. Let them serve as times of spiritual search and undergirding. When you feel most forlorn, lean most heavily upon the "Everlasting Arms". Then you will no longer be terrified of solitude, or of the circumstances that have led you to it. With God's help you can come to a realization of your own powers. You can see how to use the talents that are yours - whether they are literary, artistic, or social. You can discover how to maintain the avenues by which Soul communicates with Soul. You can know the joy that comes from true self-expression, combined with the satisfaction of helping others to feel companionship and a sense of belonging.

When you think no one understands your perplexity, or pain, or sorrow,

reach down and discover your untouched reserves of personal power! Reach out and you will find that you are part of a vast company of those who are seeking for the best that life can offer! Reach up and take the Hand of God! He is waiting to lift you into the company of those who daily are sustained by His presence.

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AFFIRMATION

With God's help I will turn hours of loneliness into hours of spiritual victory.